

Risk Communication Message Development Workshop

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Preparation

- The Message:
 - Develop key message points.
 - Personalize or localize.
 - Prepare a Q & A.

Messages

- The public will judge your message by its content, messenger, and method of delivery.

Core Messages

- Short statements
- Ensures consistency
- Used in all communications
- Ensures that your message is included in the story

How Audiences Judge Messages in a Crisis

- Speed
- Facts
- Trust
- Credibility

Building Trust and Credibility

- Empathy
- Competence
- Expertise
- Honesty and openness
- Commitment and dedication

Perception Is Reality

- Competence and humanness are key.
- How you look means as much as what you say.
 - Impact of any message:
 - 40% nonverbal
 - 40% voice
 - 20% what you say
- Build trust by repeating your core messages and by looking competent and human.

Message Development Don'ts

Don't:

- Use jargon (“outbreak” instead of “epidemic”).
- Be judgmental.
- Make promises that can't be kept.
- Use humor.
- Make more than three main points.

Sound Bites Rule!

- Words, phrases, 7–9 seconds, about 30 words
 - Make them your most core message
 - Brackets for story background
 - Punchy
 - Persuasive
 - Plain language
 - Memorable

Risk Communication Principles for Messages

- Don't overreassure.
- Acknowledge uncertainty or fear.
- Express that a process is in place.
- Express wishes.
- Give people things to do.
- Ask more of people.
- Consider the “what if” questions.

Message Ingredients for Emergencies

- Expression of empathy
- Clarification of facts
- What we don't know
- Process to get answers
- Call to action
- Statement of commitment
- Referrals (more information, next update)

Residents Want You To Answer:

- Are my family and I safe?
- What have you found that will affect my family and me?
- What can you do to protect me and my family?
- Who (what) caused this problem?
- Can you fix it?

Media and Communities Want You To Answer:

- Who is in charge?
- How are those who got hurt getting help?
- Is this thing being contained?
- What can we expect?
- What should we do?
- Why did this happen?
- Did we have forewarning that this thing would happen?

Media and Communities Want You To Answer:

- Why wasn't this kept from happening (again)?
- What else can go wrong?
- How long have you known about this?
- What do these data or this information mean?
- What bad things aren't you telling us?

The Challenge

- Different segments of the community need to do different things.
- Some actions are counter-intuitive or otherwise difficult to do.

Example—Chemical Attack

- There is a Sarin Gas release in a large city convention center
 - Many people must be treated immediately.
 - Others should shelter in place.
 - Others require no immediate action.
 - Many people may want to run away.

Example – Plague Outbreak

- There is an outbreak of plague that appears to have originated at a large festival, attended by thousands of people over several days.
 - Those infected must be treated with antibiotics within 24 hours or face possible death.
 - Isolation is essential to control this highly contagious disease.
 - People want to flee, but should shelter in place.

How Do We Segment the Community?

- People who are sick
- People who have been exposed, but not yet sick
- Family members
- Worried community members
- People outside the community

Protective Advice

- If sick – do X
- If exposed – do Y
- Others – do Z

MUST EXPLAIN WHY

Introduce Benefits & Consequences

- If you do X, Y or Z – the benefit is....
- Explain consequences of not following advice.
 - Example – people who are not seriously ill should not go to the hospital and risk being exposed to illness.

Message Development Template

Message Development for Emergency Communication		
First, consider the following:		
Audience	Purpose of Message	Method of Delivery
<input type="checkbox"/> Relationship to event	<input type="checkbox"/> Give facts/update	<input type="checkbox"/> Print media release
<input type="checkbox"/> Demographics (e.g., age, language, education, culture)	<input type="checkbox"/> Rally to action	<input type="checkbox"/> Web release
<input type="checkbox"/> Level of outrage (based on risk principles)	<input type="checkbox"/> Clarify event status	<input type="checkbox"/> Spokesperson (TV or in-person appearance)
	<input type="checkbox"/> Address rumors	<input type="checkbox"/> Radio
	<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfy media requests	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (e.g., recorded phone message)
Six Basic Emergency Message Components:		
1. Expression of empathy: _____		
2. Clarifying facts/Call for action:		
Who _____		
What _____		
Where _____		
When _____		
Why _____		
How _____		
3. What we don't know: _____		
4. Process to get answers: _____		
5. Statement of commitment: _____		
6. Referrals: _____		
For more information _____		
Next scheduled update _____		
Finally, check that your message:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Includes positive action steps	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoids jargon	
<input type="checkbox"/> Has an honest/open tone	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoids judgmental phrases	
<input type="checkbox"/> States applied risk communication principles	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoids humor	
<input type="checkbox"/> Is clear	<input type="checkbox"/> Avoids extreme speculation	
<input type="checkbox"/> Uses simple words and short sentences		

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